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ART III.—*Roman Literature.*

1. *Bibliotheca Classica Latina, sive Collectio Auctorum Classicorum Latinorum, cum Notis et Indicibus.* Paris. 1832.
2. *Family Classical Library,* No. 47. London. 1833.

THE age in which we live is often described as an age of intellect ; nor is this a misapplied denomination :—it is one which is forcibly borne out by the signs of the times. Among the most prominent and convincing of these signs, may be mentioned the extraordinary and resistless impulse given to the human mind by the diffusion of education.

In these latter days, we defer not to our brother man because he possesses title or territorial influence ; we defer to his reason alone, and on this exclusive ground, that his reason is cultivated. This is indeed a proud distinction, and without any prejudice to other operative sources, we may fairly trace one of its principal causes to the daily extending progress of sound classical information.

The era is for ever gone by, when a taste for ancient literature,—the fount from which so much instruction and delight circulate throughout the world,—was to be imbibed only in the purlieus of monastic seclusion, or in the society of wrangling gownsmen. Classical knowledge generally, and particularly Latin classical knowledge, the subject with which we are now more especially concerned, is not only widely scattered abroad, but is also preëminently influential. This is a fact which we regard with peculiar complacency, since it so happily solves the long contested point, as to the practical tendency and use of classical learning in the common intercourse of life.

We rejoice that this question, so variously and keenly discussed, admits of such full and satisfactory demonstration.

The great and justly earned popularity of the works mentioned at the head of this article, may be referred to in support of the conclusion, that classical literature has become an object of current and unlimited favor. The abundance and undisputed success of similar labors, impart still further weight to this inference.

In directing our notice to the voluminous but judiciously

selected compilation of Lemaire, we cannot forbear bestowing upon it a hearty tribute of eulogy. It was certainly a prodigious enterprise, and now that, after a careful editorial superintendence of fourteen years, it has come to a termination, we may safely pronounce it a performance in every respect creditable both to the spirit, learning and perseverance of the individuals in immediate connexion with it, and also to the genius and reputation of the nation at large. The editions of the different Roman authors selected, are those of the most approved classical scholars in France, Germany, and Holland. The type is in the very best mould of the widely celebrated Didot Press.

With regard to the Family Classical Library, our readers are aware of the flattering encouragement it receives in England, and, we may add, in this country. Its propitious association with the erudite name of Valpy may be one powerful cause of its popularity, but another still more cogent is doubtless to be found in the intrinsic value of the work itself.

The humblest citizen, who wishes to keep pace with the prevailing spirit of the age, can now gratify this noble ambition, without any serious inconvenience to his purse or his time. A university education is no longer indispensable to him, for an acquaintance with the exploits and revolutions of bygone days. He may, in his own vernacular language, at a moderate expense, and in a comparatively very brief period, familiarize himself with the character and prowess of that extraordinary people, among whom the high attributes of honor and patriotism were so ardently cherished.

It is from a deliberate conviction of the beneficial result attending the perusal and study of the venerable memorials of antiquity, in exalting and perpetuating the generous sympathies of our nature, that we so cordially hail the publication of authentic editions of the Latin classics, whether in an original or a translated form. Persuaded of the salutary effects resulting to a community from such a direction of the mind, we have embraced all fitting occasions for turning the public attention to this interesting subject.

In repeating our recommendation of the study of the Latin classics, we would not simply base it on their importance as exhaustless sources of taste,—as finished models of all that is elegant in expression and lofty in sentiment. We maintain,

that in studying the Roman authors a still nobler end is proposed, the practical exercise of the moral powers.

In this faithful mirror of so many busy and changeful ages, we may perceive the salutary fact, strikingly elucidated, of the intimate analogy between the destiny of a single individual and that of a whole nation. As the habitual sway of virtuous and honorable principles forms the happiness of the one, so does it in like manner form that of the other. We may moreover observe, in closely viewing this subject, the designs of a wise and beneficent Providence, beautifully evolved in the instrumentality of the Roman people for the progressive intellectual improvement of less enlightened nations, preparatory to the more complete introduction and establishment of moral and religious truth. Such are the enlarged and ameliorating conceptions, presented to our minds by the perusal of *Roman Literature*. And it is only when we correctly and profitably apply such conceptions, that one leading object of our education can be substantially prosecuted.

Let us be distinctly understood. What is meant by education? Properly speaking, education is the formation of elevated moral and religious principles, and the training of the mind to the practical application of those principles in society. Now, as conduct emanates from principles, it is evident that future usefulness and comfort depend on the early and enlightened direction of the understanding. 'I call,' says Milton, 'a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously, all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war.'\*

On this ground, then, as constituting one of the most useful sources of mental exercise for the conscientious discharge of duty, the study of the Roman classics must hold a prominent rank. How very favorable would be the effect upon the intellectual aspect of numbers of both sexes, if they devoted to those instructive authors, but a small portion of the many hours they devote to the ephemeral and inane productions which constantly stream from the public press. While we maintain that the general tendency of the Roman writers is to invigorate the mind by the infusion of energetic ideas,

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\* *Prose Works*, Vol. I. page 277.

and an unsophisticated masculine taste, such reading on the contrary as that now reprehended, is 'a degrading waste of precious time, and has even a bad effect on the feelings and the judgment.'\*

But it is utterly improbable that mere sentimentalism and its tinsel offspring can ever seriously engage the attention of minds, accustomed to the vigorous and fervid delineations of Cæsar, Livy, and Tacitus,† to the manly and overpowering eloquence of Cicero, to the harmonious strains of Virgil,‡ and to the nice and graceful touches of Horace.§

How preëminently worthy these and many other distinguished authors of antiquity are of being consulted and perused for the mature and exalted formation of character, is, beyond all contradiction, obvious.

We deny not, indeed, that with respect to the matter discussed by those ancient writers, and in a review of the constitution, government and current usages of the ancient republics, and more especially that of Rome, there is much to condemn; but in our retrospect of bygone times and practices, it is neither accordant with philosophy nor with fairness, to dwell on the exceptionable parts exclusively. Blemishes there are, some of them attributable to accidental circumstances, and others to the original weakness of our nature. The purest political constitutions have their dark side, and there is no country without its factious and ungrateful citizens. A Petilius, a Clodius, and a Mark Antony, are to be found in all large communities.

But we are to extend our view, and chiefly repose our contemplations on that sublime and disinterested tone of national character, with which the Romans, more than any other people upon earth, were imbued. Is there, in fact, any one hallowed and generous emotion that vibrates through the heart of man, which we may not, among them, discover in the most fascinating form? Are they not unrivalled among the nations of the world, for that profusion of truly estimable qualities, which

\* Introductory Essay to the Library of Useful Knowledge, page 36.

† 'In these three authors, the language of Rome is displayed in its utmost purity and perfection.' *Schlegel's History of Literature.* Vol. I. page 155.

‡ 'Degli altri poëti onore e lume.' *Dante*, Tom. I. page 17.

§ 'Plenus est jucunditatis et gratiæ.' *Quintil.* *Orat. lib. 10. C. 1.*

have secured for them the admiration of the latest posterity ? In the attractive exhibition of Roman deportment, shone forth with conspicuous lustre grandeur of soul in adversity,\* moderation and clemency in victory,† aggrandizing sagacity based on liberal policy,‡ deep respect for the sanctions of religion,§ enthusiastic devotedness to country,|| valor, perseverance, wisdom, justice, modesty, incorruptible integrity and inextinguishable love of liberty. This love of liberty was not confined to the few, it was national ; and as a dearly cherished principle, it became perhaps the more widely spread and firmly settled, inasmuch as its original production and final triumph were inseparably connected with disaster, agony and death.\*\*

To all this we may add the self-denial of the Romans, and their severe adherence to the strictest rules of discipline and personal restraint. So intimately were their amusements even blended with their future character and renown, that 'their exercises comprehended whatever could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions.'†† The toil to which a Roman soldier was obliged to submit seems, in modern times, absolutely incredible.‡‡ It was all borne cheerfully, however, and amid every extreme of privation, because his country demanded his services.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. 23. C. 13.

† Tit. Liv. lib. 45.

‡ 'Ils favorisèrent les villes qui faisoient le commerce, quoiqu'elles ne fussent pas sujettes ; ainsi ils augmentèrent, par la cession de plusieurs pays, la puissance de Marseille.' *Oeuvres de Montesquieu.* Tom. II. p. 137.

§ 'This was nobly illustrated in their treatment of the prisoners who escaped from the camp of Hannibal after the fatal battle of Cannae, τὸν δὲ σοφισμάτων πρὸς τὸ λῦσαι τὸν δρκον, δησαντες ἀποκατέσησαν πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους. — *Polyb.* Tom. II., p. 83.

|| 'Il y avoit ceci de particulier chez les Romains, qu'ils mêloitent quelque sentiment religieux à l'amour qu'ils avoient pour leur patrie.' *Montesquieu.* Tom. IV. p. 74.

\*\* 'Scevola, Curzio, i tre Decij avidi della gloria, la cercano ne' tormenti e nella morte per la pubblica salute. Il popolo non vede la causa, ma osserva gli effetti. La virtù sola apparisce, la passione si nasconde. L'entusiasmo dell'individuo si comunica alla moltitudine ; l'energia d'una passione si comunica all'altra ; il popolo corre ove l'eroe lo chiama.' *Filangieri, — Scienza Della Legislazione.* Tom. V. p. 42.

†† Gibbon's *Rome.* Vol. I. p. 18.

‡‡ Cicero *Tuscul. Disput.* lib. 2. p. 70.

In the whole annals of mankind, there is not to be found a more convincing instance of the advantages which accrue to a people from temperance, bravery, order, equity and emulation.\* And in the perusal of the Roman history, we have fully unfolded to us those great springs of character, which led to events so important and extraordinary. To the principles of conduct which the Romans professed to entertain, they were ever steady in practice. And if it be true, that there is no effectual method of repressing vice of all kinds, but by eagerly and unceasingly inculcating the ennobling maxims of uprightness, honor and religion, we may then, as a luminous example of this fact, safely refer to the pure and uncorrupted era of the commonwealth of Rome.

Another great advantage attending the study of the Latin classics, results from the mutual and indivisible connexion between purity and dignity of national character, and the ascending progress of masculine literary refinement. We would not be understood to insinuate that this mutual relation between vigorous intellectual taste, and high moral probity, is, in all cases, a proper standard of decision in forming an estimate of character. By no means. It is always possible that individuals, and even a considerable proportion of a community, may be referred to, who are in possession of the former, but are destitute of the latter. Yet in alluding to the general and prevailing tone of national sentiment, particularly during the brightest period of the Roman republic, the affirmation now made appears to be well grounded. Of its correctness, a reference to the history and authors of Rome will constitute the best proof.

Before the Roman mind was contaminated by foreign relations, a national sensitiveness to unsullied honor, justice and patriotism throbbed in the bosom of every citizen,—and when occasions were displayed for the performance of heroic deeds, the test was never evaded.

To the existence of this principle, universally dominant during the primitive times of the Republic, all their historians bear witness. And the great medium for unfolding those ruling sentiments of public taste, which involved national worth and national prosperity, was eloquence.

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\* Priestley's *Lectures on History*. p. 215.

A talent for eloquence arose from the very nature and elements of a republican constitution ; in its exercise it exhibited a just and impressive representation of contemporaneous feeling :—the more so, as it was often required for the discharge of important functions and responsibilities.\*

The early orators of Rome were straight forward, high minded men, whose civic rank frequently combined the vocations of magistrate, priest, and general, and as the criterion of their personal accomplishments was singularly elevated, their eloquence was the artless impassioned outpouring of the heart, while their language was consistently substantiated in hardy and marvellous achievements.

The ancient Greeks and Romans are indeed peculiar among all the nations on the globe, for the solid and momentous application which they made of eloquence. And the results arising from the impulse thus communicated to the mind, sufficiently attest the depth of that prospective sagacity, which among them rendered skill in oratory so necessary a branch of intellectual education.† But with the cultivation of their language, they also cultivated their taste and reason. The opportunities constantly recurring of addressing large assemblies of their countrymen, concerning the most important state transactions, exceedingly strengthened this bias. Hence it was that the Greek and Latin languages attained an accuracy, a beauty, a majesty and a moral influence, which enabled them to produce in the forum and the battle-field, the wonderful effects described in history.

Sentiments were then as much prized as actions. The former were regarded as the unequivocal pledges of the latter, and were appreciated accordingly. The great motive of discourse was to instruct, to convince, to persuade. For this paramount end, all the resources and energies of the mind were

\* ‘Atque ego illum, quem instituo, Romanum quemdam velim esse sapientem, qui non secretis disputationibus, sed rerum experimentis atque operibus, veré civilem virum exhibeat.’ *Quintil. Lib. 12. C 2.*

† Il faut se souvenir que Crassus, Antoine, Hortensius, Cicéon, furent élevés aux premières dignités de la république, parcequ’ils étoient éloquens. On en trouve la raison dans la nature même du gouvernement. Quand un talent est d’un usage nécessaire et habituel pour quiconque se mêle de l’administration, il faut absolument, que ceux qui le possèdent dans un degré supérieur, soient honorés et revérés.’ *Laharpe, Cours de Littérature. Tome II. p. 346.*

necessarily called into active play. The ear, the heart, the imagination and the judgment, were powerfully assailed. To accomplish such objects, gigantic labor was of course indispensable,—and this labor was stimulated by the most active competition. It was often bestowed from early youth upwards, with a degree of unyielding, indefatigable diligence that seems past all belief.

It was in this career of hardy intellectual emulation, that Cicero, for example, habitually trod, and it was thus that he was enabled to achieve those astonishing feats of literary effort, which appear almost beyond the grasp of human industry.

Almost extemporaneously he delivered his incomparable oration for Roscius. In less than two months, he wrote his three books on the Nature of the Gods, two on Divination, and his Laelius and Cato. Within the brief period of three years, he composed all his Philosophical Works, and his Treatises on Rhetoric, not merely those which are in our possession, but many besides, which are irrecoverably lost.

All this he accomplished, let us remember, not during a course of uninterrupted leisure, but in the very whirl of high and responsible public functions.

Whoever, then, expects to approach the fame and perfection of the Roman orator, must likewise possess his soul, his language, his experience, his ready and assiduous habits of active business. The youth who profitably peruses the imperishable volumes of Cicero, cannot fail to have his feelings elevated, and his understanding enlightened. And in calling to mind what is recorded of St. Augustine, namely, that his three leading wishes, in reference to the past, were to see Solomon on the throne of Israel, St. Paul in the pulpit, and ancient Rome in its glory, the young student, whose bosom beats high with dignified aspirations, will consider as one of the highest sources of gratification, that would have resulted from the accomplishment of the third of these wishes, the opportunity which it would have afforded of being present in the Forum at the moment when the thrilling tones of the great Orator were blighting his enemies, and infusing the healing balm of consolation into the hearts of his friends and fellow-citizens.

In examining the history of the life of Cicero, the student will, for his encouragement, perceive that sooner or later the

honorable toil of early application and self-improvement, is noticed and rewarded. Thus it was in ancient Rome, where men, who had no other recommendation than their personal merits, reached those eminent dignities at which long descended birth did not always arrive. We see this in the case of Cicero himself, who, though born in an obscure town of Italy, obtained the consulship, which was refused to Catiline, to Cethegus, and to Lentulus, all of them belonging to the most illustrious families in Rome.

But in the path to honorable distinction, so open and so anxiously pursued in ancient Rome, were to be found not only those who spoke well and emphatically, but also those who wrote and composed for posterity. And the secret, why the early Roman authors have retained an undying popularity in after ages, is the successful transfusion of national portraiture into their pages. Display, or the mere ostentation of eloquence, was with them a very subordinate end, and this is precisely the reason why the noble simplicity of their delineations is rendered so profoundly interesting. In their descriptions, there reign a freshness, an originality, a force and a decorum, which entirely baffle all merely imitative exertion. And wherefore was it so? Because the early historians of Rome had to commemorate civil, family and individual acts of unwonted intrepidity and self-devotedness. Their writings teemed with chivalrous deeds. Ancestral renown, and the proud recollection of the past, animated every page. This was the root of Roman character, and from this root did the transcendent power of Rome grow up. The Scipios and the Catos, Sylla, Crassus, Lucullus, Brutus, Pompey, Cæsar, and Cicero, were either orators and historians themselves, or the friends and patrons of eloquence and history.

But no sooner was imperial rule substituted for the free institutions of a republic, than the decline of Roman grandeur became perceptible. Neither the authority of Augustus, nor the favor of Mæcenas, could healthfully reinvigorate the public taste. The body politic was marked in all its parts with symptoms of decay. The will of the many was now represented by the will of the sovereign. That sovereign was frequently a tyrant or a buffoon, from whose polluting contact the pure spirit of liberty indignantly recoiled. In such disastrous circumstances, free agency was extinguished, and

imperial satellites reared up their ignominious influence on the ruin of once unfettered Rome. Personal worth and national weal were weighed in the balance against the voluptuous and degrading enjoyments of sense, and found wanting. Even the highest earthly trust that can devolve on human beings,—that of educating their children, of ameliorating the hearts, and regulating the principles and affections of the young,—was consigned to the care of slaves. The touching eloquence of their forefathers degenerated into the pedantry of unmeaning declamation, and their historical compositions into records of error and adulation.

By none is this wide spread national corruption more unfeignedly lamented, than by the Romans themselves. The works of Persius, Martial, Juvenal and Seneca abound in such regrets, and the amiable and learned Quintilian, perhaps more than any other Latin author, makes us feel the truth of these remarks.

Yet notwithstanding so melancholy a retrogradation of character among the Romans, the genius of their departed fame long continued to exhibit some glimpses of its former energy. Even the imperial purple was occasionally discovered in the arena of literary glory.

We know that Augustus extended his especial countenance to Virgil and Horace.\* Tiberius maintained a seminary, exclusively appropriated for grammarians. Claudius composed various works, and re-established the Museum of Alexandria.

Nero caused some of the finest monuments of Grecian ingenuity to be removed to Rome. He too was a poet, a musician, both instrumental and vocal,† a critic, an orator, and was from early youth initiated in the fine arts.‡

Vespasian, though proverbially parsimonious, settled annuities on many learned men.§ Domitian revered Quintilian as his bosom friend. Trajan corresponded with the younger

\* Virg.—‘in quo non apud divum Augustum gratià caruit.’—*De Oratoribus Dialogus*, p. 8.

† ‘Ne’ Giuochi Istmici un Tragico, miglior musico che Politico, perchè non ebbe l’avvertenza di desistere dal canto, per lasciar comparir quel di Nerone, che dovea certamente essere più mirabile del suo, fu strangolato sul Teatro, in faccia di tutta la Grecia.’—*Muratori, Annali D’Italia*, Tom. I. p. 156.

‡ ‘Liberales disciplinas omnes ferè puer attigit.’—*Sueton. in vita Neron.*

§ *Tiraboschi, Storia Della Letteratura Italiana*.—Tom. II. p. 220.

Pliny in terms of the most affectionate intimacy. Adrian, whose experience had been so fully ripened by foreign travel,\* was not only a learned prince, but in founding the first public University in Rome, gave a more signal proof of his personal attachment to the interests of literature, than any of his predecessors.†

But after all, the eclipse of Roman splendor had set in. The body politic was diseased, and both the intellectual and moral faculties suffered in consequence. The change from a republican to a military government, was decisive of the greatness and even of the existence of Rome. And it is no less curious than instructive, to remark how distinctly the decline of character is perceptible in literature.

Not all the influence of the Emperors could prevent the downward progress. The evil was beyond all remedy. Pliny and Tacitus made a noble effort to retrieve the decayed fame of their country, but with all their literary championship, they are far inferior to their ancestors in the union of vigor and simplicity. The former, in his justly celebrated letters, exhibits an ambitious straining after ornament, totally at variance with the flowing ease required for familiar epistolary intercourse. The latter paints dark and troubrous times with the hand of a master indeed,‡ but in the gloomy and ambiguous coloring of philosophical bitterness.

Quintilian helped to cast a literary irradiation across the thickening darkness of his age, but who would think of comparing his works, valuable as they certainly are, with those of Tully? Seneca too, with all his acknowledged excellence, failed by moral invective to reclaim the bad taste or the vicious habits of his countrymen. Even in *his* writings, philosophical and dramatic, we discover indications of the progressive decline of the national literature.

Of Lucan (to say nothing respecting his glaring inconsistencies of sentiment,)§ it may be remarked that his poem, though vivid and stirring,|| is destitute of real epic grandeur.

\* Gibbon, Vol. I. p. 122.

† Giannone, *Istoria civile di Napoli.* Tom. I. p. 53.

‡ 'As long as it shall be thought "that the proper study of mankind is man," so long the *Annals* of Tacitus will be the school of moral as well as political knowledge.'—*Murphy's Essay on the Life and Genius of Tacitus.* Page 76.

§ Schlegel's *History of Literature.* Vol. I. page 152.

|| Lucanus, *ardens et concitatus, et sententius clarissimus, et, ut di-*

In the Satires of Juvenal, we have a keen, unsparing attack on the flagitious practices of his time, but we seek in vain for the graceful poetic drapery, which is every where discoverable in those of Horace. In fine, Suetonius, Florus, Quintus Curtius, Justin, Silius Italicus, and Claudian, with all their undenied abilities, furnish,—both in the matter and style of their writings,—still further proofs of the truth of the position advanced,—that the shades of a dark and ominous eclipse were gradually mantling over the moral character and literary fame of ancient Rome.

But in order to benefit effectually by the experience of the past, we must decide for ourselves, by personal study and research. That these observations may in some measure contribute to this beneficial end, is our sincere desire. Certain it is, that, in what has been said above, we have by no means overrated the incalculable importance of the end. In support of this opinion, we refer to the following recorded attestation of one of the ablest scholars and most distinguished men of modern times. ‘Study, I beseech you, (says he) so to store your minds with the exquisite learning of former ages, that you may always possess within yourselves sources of rational and refined enjoyment, which will enable you to set at nought the grosser pleasures of sense, whereof other men are slaves.’\*

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#### ART. IV.—*Usury, and the Usury Laws.*

*Report of a Committee of the General Court of Massachusetts upon the Petition of W. Tuckerman and Others for the Repeal of the Laws against Usury.*  
Boston. 1834.

AT the last session of the General Court of this Commonwealth, a petition was presented on behalf of a large number of the most intelligent and respectable citizens of Boston, engaged in active business, for a repeal of the laws against

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cam quod sentio, magis oratoribus quam poetis adnumerandus. *Quinctil. Institut. Orator.* lib. 10. cap. 1.

\* Brougham's Inaugural Discourse before the University of Glasgow. Page 6.